United Nations A/57/PV.82

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

82nd plenary meeting
Friday, 11 Apr. 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 117 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/57/705/Add.9)

The President: Before proceeding to the items on the agenda, I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/57/705/Add.9, by which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/57/705 and Addenda 1 to 8, Venezuela has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/57/705/Add.9?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Fifth report of the General Committee (A/57/250/Add.4)

The President: In its report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional item, entitled "Global road safety crisis", should be included in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include in the agenda of the current session that additional item?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the additional item should be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider that item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to inform members that the item entitled "Global road safety crisis" becomes agenda item 169.

Agenda item 27

The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict

Letter dated 29 January 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly transmitting the report on the Kimberley Process (A/57/489)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

03-31976 (E)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.76)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat, who will inform members of some technical corrections to be made to draft resolution A/57/L.76.

Mr. Chen Jian (Under Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to inform members of the following correction to draft resolution A/57/L.76.

In the ninth preambular paragraph, the year of the adoption of resolution 56/263 should read 2002.

That correction will be reflected in the final version of the draft resolution. The Secretariat would like to offer its sincere apologies for any inconvenience the error may have caused, and promises to look into it and to take all necessary measures to avoid any recurrence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.76.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Allow me, at the outset, to express my country's gratitude to you, Mr. President, for scheduling this plenary meeting of the General Assembly to consider agenda item 27, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict".

The provisions of General Assembly resolution 56/263, of 13 March 2002, mandated this body to remain seized of the issue of the curtailment of conflict diamonds. Those diamonds fuel strife, violence and disasters because the proceeds of their sales are used to buy weapons. The serious humanitarian consequences of those criminal acts are well known.

Efforts to curtail conflict diamonds became an international responsibility when the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 55/56 in 2001. As was the case with the texts of that year and of 2002, we hope that the General Assembly will today adopt by acclamation the draft resolution before us. Last year the General Assembly welcomed the detailed proposals for an international certification scheme for rough diamonds that was developed in the Kimberley Process. The Assembly also urged the finalization of that scheme, as well as its subsequent implementation.

I am pleased to report that the Kimberley Process finalized the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme at a meeting held in Ottawa, Canada, in March 2002. It launched the Scheme at a ministerial meeting held at Interlaken, Switzerland, in November 2002. The implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme began on 1 January 2003. To date there are 55 participants. Since the last session of the General Assembly, the Kimberley Process has issued a report on the progress made. That report is contained in the annex to document A/57/489, of 21 February 2003.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the road we have taken to where we are this morning has not been an easy one. Many countries have had to take critical decisions in support of this Process, despite the reservations they may have had. The thing that unites us is that this draft resolution is a contribution to peace and security in countries where people have lost their lives because of conflict diamonds. The implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has been a gradual process. The next plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process will be held in Johannesburg from 28 to 30 April 2003, with a view to addressing implementation issues, among other things.

The draft resolution contained in document A/56/L.76 is procedural in nature. It does not contain provisions that have financial implications. The draft resolution strongly supports the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme as a necessary measure to combat the devastating role of conflict diamonds in fuelling conflicts, in order to promote international peace and security. It recognizes that the proposed international certification scheme will help ensure effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions containing sanctions on the trade in conflict diamonds. In that regard, we are pleased to note that the Security Council adopted its resolution 1459 (2003), strongly supporting the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. Draft resolution A/57/L.76 also recognizes the need to ensure that the measures taken to implement the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme are consistent with international trade rules. It stresses the importance of the widest possible participation and urges all Member States to become active participants.

The Kimberley Process complements the efforts to create and maintain peace and security. For that reason, my delegation would like to encourage the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution.

In closing, I have the honour to announce that the following countries have joined the list of sponsors of

draft resolution A/57/L.76: Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Namibia, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tonga, Ukraine, the United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Egypt is pleased to participate in this meeting on the Kimberley Process and Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for the international trade in diamonds on the basis of its appreciation of the efforts that have been made over the past two years to review an important issue that has a direct impact on international peace and security: the role of diamonds in fuelling armed conflicts.

This problem has long posed a threat to peace, stability and development opportunities in Africa. The illicit trade in diamonds is a key element in the bloody conflicts that have plagued Africa, claiming thousands of innocent African victims and causing the total devastation of the economic and social structures of many States. This illicit trade has promoted the proliferation of conflicts beyond the borders of individual States to hatefully engulf entire subregions. In addition, countries, peoples and societies are being deprived of their wealth and resources, which are transformed by an exploitative network of political and economic interests into a medium of mass destruction.

In this context, we note that the huge human, economic, social and political costs of what have been called "blood diamonds" have been very high. These costs have been borne by the international community, which must assume its responsibilities for putting an end to this vicious circle of exploitation, destruction and danger for the peoples of Africa.

In our view, the Kimberley Process represents an important system for organized and coordinated international action under United Nations auspices. The delegation of Egypt wishes to stress a number of important points on which the international community should base its action in addressing international conflicts, in particular those in Africa.

First, the Kimberley Process reflects the need to tackle the very roots of conflict in their various manifestations, without confining ourselves solely to assessing the political, military or security aspects. We must take into account the facts that every conflict has unique characteristics and dimensions and that the international community's success in addressing and resolving conflicts must be based essentially on an early evaluation and analysis of their roots and causes, before they claim victims and destroy wealth and resources.

Secondly, the Kimberley Process stresses the need for the political will of all parties concerned throughout the world. Without such will at the highest political level in the countries involved, the commitment to achieving results — as we may note in the documents before us — cannot be summoned and we would not be here today to celebrate this important step in the world's collective progress in addressing one of the major causes of conflict in Africa.

Thirdly, the Process is a good example of the method and spirit of collaboration between the United Nations and its Member States, on the one hand, and the private sector, civil society and regional and international organizations, on the other.

Fourthly, the Kimberley Process should be welcomed as a model of complementarity in action within the United Nations system in addressing a question that has a direct impact on international peace and security. Coordination between the Security Council and the General Assembly through this approach can set an example to be followed and promoted by all in endeavours undertaken by the United Nations system effectively and justly to address issues with technical, political, economic and humanitarian aspects and questions that impact international peace and security.

Fifthly, the Process reflects the concept of State leadership in achieving, under United Nations auspices, the success of a mission that faced well-known political and technical difficulties in registering tangible and preliminary accomplishments and results. The Egyptian delegation wishes to commend the efforts of the South African Government through its chairmanship of the Process and its capacity to achieve a measure of harmony between the difficult dual tasks of determining the goals and choosing the best means to achieve them.

In conclusion, the delegation of Egypt wishes to reiterate that the results of the Kimberley Process

represent a major success for all who have participated in it. Nevertheless, we must affirm that the great challenge still before the international community is ensuring the commitment and respect by all parties for the rules and criteria established by the Process, including periodic reassessments and, if need be, updating of the Certification Scheme by the United Nations.

The United Nations efforts to address African conflicts through the Kimberley Process are an important step towards taking a much broader and more profound approach to this problem. Our support today for the results of this Process represents support for United Nations action to prevent, avoid and contain international conflicts in general and to demonstrate that the United Nations system is capable of addressing all their aspects and dimensions, even the most complex.

Ms. Kalay-Kleitman (Israel): Allow me at the outset to commend South Africa for its inspiring leadership and commitment to the success of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and for its willingness to continue to serve as Chair through the first year of the Process' implementation.

Israel would also like to take this opportunity to commend the international community, the States members of the Kimberley Process, the General Assembly, the Security Council, bodies of civil society and non-governmental organizations for their contributions to the extensive and wide-ranging progress that has been made in combating the scourge of conflict diamonds since the inception of the Kimberley Process in 2000.

Recognizing that the trade in conflict diamonds is a matter of serious international concern that can be directly linked to the fuelling of armed conflict, the activities of rebel movements aimed at undermining or overthrowing legitimate Governments and the illicit traffic in and proliferation of armaments, especially small arms and light weapons, Israel shares the view of Member States that there is a clear moral and commercial imperative to halt this phenomenon.

It should be noted that the vast majority of rough diamonds produced in the world are from legitimate sources and are not blood diamonds. At its peak in 1999, the trade in conflict diamonds accounted for less than 4 per cent of the world's annual rough-diamond production. However, that is no reason for complacency and we must remain fully committed to introducing measures and procedures that will protect legitimate channels of distribution from any potential conflict-diamond infiltration. Even one diamond traded in this way is one diamond too many.

Israel recognizes that this is a significant humanitarian issue. The devastating impact of conflicts fuelled by trade in conflict diamonds on the peace, safety and security of people in affected countries and the systematic and gross human rights violations that have been perpetrated in such conflicts should be of grave concern to the international community. In this spirit, we believe that it is imperative that we continue to take decisive and urgent action to curb the role of the rough-diamond trade in inflaming conflict, thereby preventing future losses to and the suffering of innocent civilian populations in Africa.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Israel has been wholly committed to the Kimberley Process since its inception, having participated in all meetings — from London through Interlaken this past November — and has worked within the framework of the Process to advance a system of documentation that would be both effective, by limiting the role of rough diamonds in inflaming and financing conflicts, and pragmatic by alleviating an undue burden on the legitimate diamond trade.

Since the beginning of this year, based on conclusions of the Kimberley Process, Israel has proceeded to implement a system of documenting and monitoring rough-diamond traffic to and from Israel. Similarly, we have barred trade in rough diamonds with countries that are not participants in the Process.

In addition to the regulations set forth by the Kimberley Process, the Israeli Diamond Association has also adopted the recommendations of the World Diamond Council, the World Federation of Diamond Bourses and the International Diamond Manufacturers Association to implement a system of warranties for diamonds. In this manner, all buyers and sellers of both rough and polished diamonds, including jewellery containing diamonds, must make the following affirmative statement on all invoices:

> "The diamonds herein invoiced have been purchased from legitimate sources not involved in funding conflict and in compliance with United Nations resolutions."

This system will dually complement and strengthen the credibility of the Kimberley Process agreement and provide the means by which consumers might more effectively be assured of the origin of their diamonds and verify that they are indeed conflict-free.

Israel also supports a World Trade Organization (WTO) waiver relating to the establishment of a certification process preventing trade in conflict diamonds. This is in recognition of the interests of many WTO members in the legitimate trade of rough diamonds and the importance of managing the Kimberley Process in accordance with WTO regulations.

Israel has also supported the activities of the United Nations on this matter, noting our co-sponsorship of General Assembly resolutions 55/56 in December 2000 and 56/263 in March 2002.

Israel reaffirms its support today. We will co-sponsor the current draft resolution on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, as we have done in the past. In this context, Israel would like to take this opportunity to call on all States to present a united front in the campaign to stop the trade in conflict diamonds, to join the Kimberley Process and to support the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution before us today. Israel remains determined to further our contribution to the Kimberley Process and we look forward to attending the upcoming annual meeting, which will be held this month in Johannesburg.

Mr. Dube (Botswana): Botswana, as a co-convener of the Kimberley Process, is delighted that the General Assembly is meeting once again to consider the agenda item "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict" and, more importantly, to consider the draft resolution before us. Members will recall that the General Assembly debated this issue on 13 March 2002 and adopted resolution 56/263, which mandated participants in the Kimberley Process to continue negotiations to break the link between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and armed conflict in some African countries. We are meeting today, hopefully, to put our stamp of approval on the momentous task that has been achieved by the Kimberley Process in reaching agreement on an international Certification Scheme for trade in rough diamonds.

The diamond industry has had a tarnished image that emerged from African conflicts financed mostly through the illicit trade in diamonds by rebel groups and warlords. In such conflicts, it was inevitable that we would witness not only the plunder of natural resources, with little or nothing accruing to the national treasuries, but also gross violations of human rights. The horrific scenes that were aired on our television screens of men, women and children hacked to death or with their limbs amputated by drug-crazed rebels rightly spurred human rights groups and other activists to campaign against the diamond trade. The campaign, however, also targeted innocent legitimate producers, such as my country, Namibia and South Africa, which account for more than 70 per cent of world diamond production. As the world's largest producer of diamonds by value and the most dependent economy on trade in rough diamonds, Botswana would have suffered immeasurably if a consumer boycott had succeeded. The diamond industry contributes directly one third of our gross domestic product, more than half of public revenues, and 80 per cent of our export earnings. The economies of other southern African countries would also have suffered.

The convening of the Kimberley process was therefore a response by the three major producers of southern Africa to engage the international community and civil society in the first serious attempt to ban conflict diamonds from the marketplace. There were also noble efforts by other countries to introduce national legislation to ban the import of what came to be known as "blood diamonds". But it was always clear to us from the beginning that control of this trade could succeed only if there was an internationally coordinated effort.

It is truly remarkable that negotiators in the Kimberley process, who started off with widely different interests and solutions to the problem, finally reached consensus on an international certification scheme. The Interlaken Declaration, issued by ministers at their meeting in Switzerland last November, is the outcome of the long and hard negotiations that took place over two years.

We wish to pay tribute to all producer and consumer countries, to the diamond industry and to the non-governmental organizations that worked so hard to reach this agreement. We also pay tribute to the Republic of South Africa, which so selflessly chaired the Kimberley process negotiations and patiently guided us to their mutual conclusion.

The campaign to ban the trade in conflict diamonds will succeed only through the effective implementation of the international certification scheme. This, to us, is a challenge for the United Nations. The various resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly on this matter must be implemented fully to back up the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, which came into full effect on 1 January 2003. Governments of participating States will to pass the necessary legislation to incorporate the provisions of the certification scheme into their trade regulations.

In this respect, it is worth noting that the original conveners — Botswana, Namibia and South Africa — already had legislation in place and had the Kimberley Process certificates printed by 1 January of this year. We are informed that almost all other producer States are in the process of issuing Kimberley Process certificates. Consumer countries, notably the European Community, Canada, Australia and Japan, are also in compliance. More significantly, this week, on 9 April, the House of Representatives in Washington passed the "Clean Diamonds Trade Act", which has been in the works for many months. It is hoped that the Senate will pass a similar bill fairly soon. This legislation fully backs the Kimberley Process and has provisions for the implementation of the certification scheme in the United States.

The effective implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme will also require participants to have full capacity and resources. The issuing of Kimberley Process certificates for both exports and imports will have no meaning if the issuing State does not have the necessary administrative machinery, monitoring and verification controls at the mines, nor the trained personnel. A number of countries, especially those that are emerging from conflict, will require technical and financial assistance to put into place the necessary mechanisms that will enable them to fulfil the requirements of the certification scheme. In this respect, we believe that the United Nations agencies can provide valuable assistance.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my country's full support for the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. We wish to commend to the Assembly the report of the Chairman of the Kimberley Process. We urge Member States to adopt the draft resolution before us by acclamation.

Mr. Laggner (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): The illegal trade in rough diamonds which are mined in conflict areas is fuelling and prolonging wars. Over the past decade, such trade has contributed to the deaths of tens of thousands of people, to the massive uprooting of peoples and to the destruction of entire regions. Conflict diamonds have a major impact on human security, which the international community must address. Conflict diamonds also pose a threat to the legal diamond industry, because, even if they make up only a small proportion of the total volume of diamond transactions, they can have an impact on the overall image of the diamond trade.

The first meeting to discuss the trade in conflict diamonds took place in May 2000 in Kimberley, on the initiative of African diamond-producing countries. Over the past two and a half years, a tremendous amount has been achieved. The outcome of these efforts was the declaration adopted in Interlaken, Switzerland, on 5 November 2002, which led to the launching of an international system to certify the origin of rough diamonds. It was a decisive step in the struggle against the scourge represented by the trade in conflict diamonds. Switzerland welcomes the fact that the development and entry into force of this certification scheme took place in a very short period of time, compared with the process of elaborating other international instruments.

Switzerland congratulates all the countries involved in the Kimberley Process, the diamond industry and civil society, who worked together to produce this result. My country also thanks South Africa for chairing the Kimberley Process with such skill and conviction.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is a response to the requests made by the General Assembly in its resolutions 55/56 and 56/263. It is also an instrument which will permit better implementation of sanctions decided by the Security Council. For a number of years, Switzerland has supported the development of targeted sanctions that more effectively aim at those actors that threaten international peace and security, while sparing, to as great a degree as possible, the civilian population and third countries. My country feels that this certification scheme concerning the origin of rough diamonds contributes to efforts now under way to refine and strengthen the sanctions mechanism.

The adoption of this certification scheme is, of course, not an end in itself. The same determination must be given now to achieving respect for the scheme and for its operation. We face several challenges: ensuring the greatest possible participation in the certification scheme by encouraging new countries to join it; ensuring that it is applied fully by all the actors concerned; and establishing appropriate and efficient control mechanisms.

Switzerland calls upon all countries that have until now remained outside the system to participate in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and to ensure that it gradually becomes universal.

As for the countries that are already taking part, Switzerland invites them to remain determined in their resolve to put an end to the trade in conflict diamonds and not to be misled by a false sense of security that could possibly arise from the launching of the Certification Scheme. There is still important work to do, and we must do it together.

Mr. Tesch (Australia): Australia, as the largest producer of rough diamonds by volume globally, welcomes the establishment of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds. We consider the Scheme an essential step towards curbing the trade in conflict diamonds, thereby reducing the ability of rebel movements to acquire the arms that have fuelled civil wars and conflicts in several African nations. We are steadfast in our determination to prevent the devastating impact of such conflicts on the peace, safety and security of people in affected countries and the systematic and gross human rights violations that have been perpetrated in such conflicts.

On 5 November last year, Australia joined with 34 other countries and the European Union in adopting the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds in Interlaken, Switzerland. The full introduction of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme in Australia on 1 January this year marks two years of collaborative effort by Australian Government agencies, the Australian rough diamond industry and civil society.

Australia welcomes the significant role played by industry groups and non-governmental organizations in the development of the Scheme and believes that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme successfully balances the need to restrict trade in conflict diamonds with the need to protect and further develop the present legitimate trade in rough diamonds.

Australia urges all Member States involved in the trade of rough diamonds to join the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme without delay. In that spirit, Australia is pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution before the General Assembly.

Mr. Ayari (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes to contribute to the debate that brings us together today, which we feel is of particular importance. Our debate falls within the framework of the efforts of the international community to end the flow of rough diamonds that rebels and certain armed groups use to finance armed conflict and to overthrow legitimate Governments. The convening of this debate testifies to the determination of the United Nations to attack head on this scourge, which constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

In that context, I wish to recall and welcome the General Assembly's adoption of several resolutions concerning the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict. In those resolutions, the General Assembly has, inter alia, emphasized that it was necessary to break the link between the illicit trade of rough diamonds and armed conflict, while drawing attention to the fact that the legal trade of diamonds contributes to the prosperity and development of producing countries. The Assembly has also underlined the fact that a certain number of countries heavily depend on diamond mining for their socio-economic development. Moreover, the General Assembly has asked that a simple and functional international system for issuing certificates for rough diamonds be established.

We welcome the progress achieved in the framework of the Kimberley Process, set up at the initiative of Southern African countries, with the aim of cutting off the sources fuelling rebels with conflict diamonds, protecting the legitimate diamond industry and establishing an international certification scheme based on national certification systems and internationally agreed minimum standards.

We welcome the decision to implement the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme as of 1 January 2003. We are convinced that the Scheme will help the effective implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council containing sanctions against the trade in conflict diamonds.

We underline that the Certification Scheme will be credible and will help to put an end to conflict diamonds only if we have the necessary political will and the active participation of all producing and importing countries, as well as of other parties, who are called upon to implement the system rigorously in order to effectively block trade in such diamonds.

The devastating consequences of conflicts fuelled by the trade in conflict diamonds on the peace, safety and security of countries have never been so harshly felt as in Africa, especially in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Conflict diamonds are a crucial factor in the prolongation of the conflicts in those countries and have had devastating effects on their economies, thus exacerbating the suffering of their peoples and preventing them from undertaking constructive work towards development in order to lift themselves out of poverty and destitution.

We believe that it is essential that the resources and intrinsic potential of the African continent, especially its mineral resources and diamonds, should be totally devoted to development, the strengthening of peace and stability and the prevention and settlement of conflict.

My delegation will welcome the adoption of draft resolution A57/L.76 on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, aimed at breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to the prevention and settlement of conflicts. My delegation also wishes to express its satisfaction at seeing the item entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict" inscribed on the provisional agenda of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Allow me to commend the Republic of South Africa, in its capacity as Chair of the Kimberley Process, for its wise guidance of the group. We would also like to thank all participants — Governments, regional organizations — and private sector and non-governmental organizations for their contributions.

The negotiation process that was concluded in Interlaken in November 2002 is a major achievement in halting the fuelling of conflicts through the illegal trade of diamonds. It provides a mechanism that reflects the resolve of the international community to deal with the factors that fuel armed conflicts and stimulate the undermining or overthrowing of legitimate Governments, as well as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, mainly in the African continent.

As a producer and consumer of diamonds, Brazil attaches great significance to the fact that the negotiations resulted in the creation of a Certification Scheme that aims at reducing the role of conflict diamonds in armed conflict, while at the same time protecting the legitimate trade in diamonds, which plays an important role in economic development. We are confident that the certification scheme will help ensure the effective implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council mandating embargoes on the trade in conflict diamonds, thus contributing to the promotion of international peace and security. Yet, the progress made with the creation of the Certification Scheme does not change our understanding that the illegal trade in diamonds represents only a stimulus to conflict. Its deep-rooted causes must be met with equal resolve. Otherwise, our efforts will fall short of their purpose.

Brazil encourages the widest participation in the Certification Scheme. As stated in the Kimberley Process Chairman's report, the Process is an ongoing international initiative and would benefit greatly from even broader participation. Let me reaffirm the commitment of Brazil to its full implementation.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): My delegation would like at the outset to thank Ambassador Kumalo of South Africa for his comprehensive introductory statement, as well as for his introduction of draft resolution A/57/L.76. The draft resolution reflects the hard work that has gone into, and the progress already achieved in, the Kimberley Process. In this regard, we applaud South Africa's leadership in the Kimberley Process and support the draft resolution before the General Assembly today.

My delegation notes the significant progress that has been achieved so far in the Kimberley Process. The successful adoption, in Interlaken, Switzerland, on 5 November 2002, of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds, and the decision to implement the Scheme from 1 January 2003, are testimony to the strong commitment of the international community to stem the illicit trade in rough diamonds, which continues to threaten international peace and security by fuelling armed conflict.

Malaysia has been following very closely the deliberations in Windhoek, Brussels, Moscow, Twickenham, Gaborone, Ottawa and Interlaken. Malaysia is strongly committed to the maintenance of international peace and security. We support all efforts undertaken by the international community to prevent armed conflict. In that regard, on 10 February 2003 Malaysia submitted its application to participate in the Kimberley Process. We note that the first plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process to be held since the Scheme was launched is scheduled to take place at Sandton, in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 28 to 30 April 2003. We hope to participate actively in that process.

Malaysia shares the deep concern that has been expressed by other delegations concerning the role of the illicit trade in rough diamonds in fuelling armed conflict in some countries in the African continent, in particular in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This should not be allowed to go on. The countries of Africa need peace, stability and development.

Armed conflict will only retard progress and have catastrophic consequences. Malaysia is particularly alarmed about the negative impact of the illicit trade in rough diamonds, which represents only 4 per cent of the total diamond trade in the world. This illicit trade in rough diamonds should not be allowed to have such a disproportionate and devastating impact on peace and security in Africa. Diamond-financed armed conflict must be prevented at all costs. We must de-link forever armed conflict and the trade in rough diamonds.

To that end, Malaysia recognizes that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme — in tandem with the relevant Security Council resolutions, which contain sanctions relating to trade in conflict diamonds — plays an important role in effectively stopping diamond-financed armed conflict,. Malaysia also subscribes to the belief that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds will be vital in ensuring effective compliance with and implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Constantino (Angola): I would like to start by thanking the President for his initiative to include on the agenda of the General Assembly the subject of the role of diamonds in fuelling conflicts, which is of great importance.

We would also like to thank Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa, for having presented to the General Assembly the report on the Kimberley Process, pursuant to resolution 56/263.

In discussing the subject of the role of diamonds in fuelling conflicts, we are dealing not only with armed conflict, which, as we know, represents an obstacle to the progress and economic development of countries, but also with humanitarian issues and gross violations of international conventions on human rights.

The problem of conflict diamonds is one of serious international concern, and measures to address the problem should involve all parties, including producing, processing, exporting and importing countries, as well as the diamond industry.

Diamond-producing, -processing and -consuming countries have attempted to initiate stronger regulations to isolate conflict diamonds. Such measures include a global certification scheme that relies upon certificates of origin that cannot be forged.

Launched in May 2000, the Kimberley Process was initiated by several Southern African countries in response to growing international pressure to address peace and security concerns. The Kimberley Process had its origins in the decision of Southern African countries to take action to stop the flow of conflict diamonds to the markets and, at the same time, to protect the diamond industry of those countries.

As Members are aware, the Republic of Angola played a very important role in the introduction of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, which should substantially reduce the likelihood of conflict diamonds playing a role in fuelling armed conflict.

We consider the Kimberley Process to be the main international initiative established to develop practical approaches to conflict diamonds, which are used by rebel movements to finance their military activities aimed at overthrowing legitimate Governments.

By adopting the international Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds based on internationally agreed standards, the international community has undertaken the most far-reaching political engagement in breaking the link between illicit transactions in

rough diamonds and armed conflict and the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Republic of Angola strongly supports the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme as a valuable contribution to preventing trafficking in conflict diamonds and looks forward to its implementation, since we are firmly convinced that the Certification Scheme will curb the flow of rough diamonds from rebel-held conflict areas, thereby contributing substantially to peace and security efforts.

As a sponsor, therefore, Angola looks forward to the adoption of the draft resolution before us and urges all Member States to continue working to make the international Certification Scheme a reality.

Ms. Cavaliere de Nava (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes the holding of this debate on an issue to which my country attaches singular importance, since it is part of a broader approach to the prevention and solution of conflicts and, at the same time, promotes the realization of the objectives of maintaining and strengthening international peace and security. We are especially pleased that this debate is being held in a diverse and democratic forum such as the General Assembly, in which all Member States can express themselves with regard to an issue that is of grave international concern.

Venezuela promotes a broad, comprehensive concept of peace that enables us to address all of the causes and factors related to the outbreak and development of conflicts and, at the same time, incorporates a commitment by all States to work to create economic and social conditions that enable us to eradicate those causes. Therefore — and because Venezuela agrees with a great number of countries that the illicit diamond trade has had harmful effects in promoting armed conflicts and has also delayed and hampered efforts in the quest for peace and security in the countries directly affected — our country expresses its deep satisfaction at the realization of an international initiative on behalf of peace.

Venezuela has actively followed the whole process related to the establishment of a practical, effective mechanism to combat the illicit diamond trade in conflict areas, convinced that a mechanism such as the one that has been established will become an effective monitoring instrument that will discourage the illicit diamond trade, thereby eliminating conditions that foster conflicts in affected areas and strengthening efforts and strategies aimed at resolving them.

On the basis of some of those considerations, and mindful of the great usefulness of that mechanism, Venezuela firmly supports the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds, in which we have participated since 1 February this year. In that regard, it is gratifying to report that the Government of Venezuela is implementing the necessary measures for the Scheme's effective implementation. Among the most important, I should mention the issuance of a provisional certificate indicating that the rough diamonds of the shipment in question have been processed in accordance with the provisions of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

Moreover, we are making the necessary adjustments to Venezuelan legislation to include the provisions required in order to comply fully — and in accordance with our legal framework — with the Certification Scheme's minimum requirements, which will enable us definitively to implement the Scheme beginning on 1 July 2003.

As one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/57/L.76, we wish on this occasion to reaffirm my country's commitment to this joint effort while calling on States Members of the Organization which are not yet part of the Certification Scheme to participate in it, thus achieving the broadest and most effective participation possible. Likewise, we wish to express our appreciation for the commendable work of the Government of South Africa as Chair of the Kimberley Process and to reaffirm our willingness, together with other participating States, to continue to lend our efforts and our resolve to ensuring the success of this initiative, now made a reality.

Mr. Thamrin (Indonesia): It is the pleasure of my delegation to participate in this General Assembly debate on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict. Before I proceed, I should like to express our warm gratitude to the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations in its capacity as Chair of the Kimberley Process. Like other Member States, we feel that South Africa has done a good job and therefore deserves the commendation and respect of this world body. In that connection, it is with great pleasure that my delegation has joined in sponsoring the draft

resolution now before the General Assembly, on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict (A/57/L.76).

It is now firmly established that there is a strong linkage between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and the fuelling of armed conflicts in Africa. Representing up to 20 per cent of the total annual world diamond trade, conflict diamonds have contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in the past decade alone, as well as having engendered huge civilian displacements and the humanitarian crises inevitably resulting from them.

Indeed, the Kimberley Process began as an effort by the countries of the Southern African region to combat the distribution of these conflict diamonds on the market without prejudice to the legitimate diamond industry. Bringing them under control or eliminating them altogether will further help to ensure that Governments are able to use their national diamond resources to finance economic and social development for the welfare of their people.

Today, the Kimberley Process involves more than 47 Governments as well as the European Community, the diamond industry and civil society. It is at the forefront in establishing minimum international standards for national certification schemes related to the trade in rough diamonds. My delegation strongly aligns itself with those efforts, which are targeted at frustrating those who consider it to be in their selfish interest to inflame political conflict by using the economic power of illicit diamonds. We recall that, only last January, the Security Council adopted its resolution 1459 (2003), by which it expressed its support for the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds, which was adopted at the Interlaken, Switzerland, conference on 5 November 2002.

My delegation shares that view and applauds those strides of progress. We wholeheartedly welcome the Certification Scheme and the voluntary system of industry self-regulation enshrined in the Interlaken Declaration. Under the Declaration, conflict diamonds were removed from international trade beginning on 1 January 2003.

Needless to say, as important as the Kimberley Process is, even more important are broad participation in it and a functional monitoring process. Unless the Certification Scheme is carefully and closely monitored, its chances of success are rather slim. To that extent, we encourage the widest possible participation in the Certification Scheme worldwide, and we urge all States Members of the United Nations to participate in it. In effect, nations that do not participate in monitoring help rebels in extending armed conflicts, with their attendant devastating consequences for innocent civilians. In this regard, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme will certainly help in the effective and consistent implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council relating to conflict diamonds, and once and for all bring them under close control.

Finally, my delegation would like to express our appreciation to the Government of South Africa for agreeing to chair the Kimberley Process during its first year of implementation. We proudly co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In the view of the Chinese delegation, the Kimberley Process is closely related to the discussions on African conflicts that have taken place in the United Nations, including in the Security Council. The Process has also been endorsed by the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

The Process is highly political in nature; therefore, in addressing outstanding issues related to it, it is imperative to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States.

In this spirit, we wish to make two oral amendments to the draft resolution contained in document A/57/L.76. First, we propose that, in the seventh preambular paragraph, after the word "Recalling", the words "the Charter of the United Nations Charter and" be added. The second amendment is to the eighteenth preambular paragraph. The last part, starting from "including those producing, exporting and importing rough diamonds" should be deleted, reverting instead to the wording contained in the seventeenth preambular paragraph of last year's resolution, which reads as follows:

(*spoke in English*)

> "including producing, exporting and importing States, the diamond industry and civil society".

(*spoke in Chinese*)

With respect to these two amendments, we have held consultations and had contacts with the majority of the sponsors. They all have indicated their agreement with the two amendments I have just proposed.

On that basis, China decided to join the consensus on this draft resolution.

Mr. Simancas (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico shares the view that the creation of a mechanism for the certification of rough diamonds contributes to stability in the region and to the maintenance of international peace and security.

My delegation therefore appeals for closer communication between the Kimberley Process and the Security Council sanctions committees, especially those on Liberia and Sierra Leone. My delegation believes that, in the implementation phase of the process, efforts should be made to achieve a broader implementation of this diamond-certification mechanism by all importing and exporting States.

Finally, allow me to reiterate our appreciation to South Africa for its efforts. Mexico will participate actively in the meeting scheduled for the end of this month in Johannesburg.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3208 (XXIX) of 11 October 1974, I call on the Observer for the European Community.

Ms. Juul-Jørgensen (European Community): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries acceding to the European Union Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia and the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area Norway all align themselves with this agreement.

The linkage between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and the fuelling of armed conflicts that affect international peace and security has been well known for some years now. On various occasions the General Assembly has expressed its concern over this issue. In a number of resolutions, the Security Council has taken steps to address this sad reality, which afflicts several countries, but which is a matter pertaining to the responsibility of the international community as a whole, especially those countries trading in diamonds.

We therefore welcome the fact that several diamond trading countries gathered in the framework of the Kimberley Process to take up their responsibility as United Nations Member States and to consider how they could complement Security Council resolutions with instruments to support their implementation.

A number of European Union Member States supported the Process from the start and contributed their best efforts to its initial deliberations. The European Union as a whole jointly expressed strong support for its endeavours. As soon as consensus emerged on a draft certification scheme for international trade in rough diamonds, the European Union member States mandated the Commission to negotiate such an agreement on behalf of the European Community. That was less than two years ago.

Today the European Union is pleased to see the Kimberley Process presenting the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme to the United Nations as the result of those negotiations.

The European Union believes that this Certification Scheme will stem the flow of conflict diamonds to a great extent. As such, it can be an instrument at the disposal of the United Nations, ensuring, whenever necessary, the implementation of Security Council resolutions and making a contribution to conflict prevention.

The European Union hopes that the legitimate diamond industry, upon which many countries are dependent for their economic and social development, will also be protected as a consequence. That is why the European Union welcomes and supports this draft resolution.

A chain is as strong as its weakest link. I would therefore like to stress that in order for the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme to fulfil its promises its complete and effective implementation is necessary by all subscribing to it. We welcome its implementation and strongly encourage participants to further resolve outstanding issues. In that regard, we support the ongoing process to refine and implement the regime adopted at the Interlaken conference.

I can bring to the Assembly's attention that the European Community is a participant in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and has itself been

applying the Scheme in full since February 2003, on the basis of European Community regulation applicable in all European Union member States.

The European Union hopes that further progress can be made, at the upcoming plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process and beyond, towards the goal of making the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme as effective as possible. In that respect, the European Union believes that a regular review of its implementation by participants can greatly contribute to the Certification Scheme's effectiveness and credibility, on which consumer trust and the economic prospects for diamond mining, trading and the processing countries are greatly dependent.

We are confident that the General Assembly's strong support for the Scheme, as expressed in the draft resolution, will help maintain the momentum to that end.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. At the request of the delegation of South Africa in its capacity as Chairman of the Kimberley Process, we will postpone taking action on the draft resolution until Tuesday, 15 April.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.